

# THE TRIBAL ORGANISATION OF THE NANDI

BY CHARLES HEMSTED

The tribe is divided into fifteen geographical groups.

(1) Kakapoch . . . . .	4 Divisions
(2) Kapchepkendi . . . . .	5 „
(3) Tibiñgot . . . . .	3 „
(4) Kamalilo . . . . .	1 Division
(5) Kaptalam . . . . .	2 Divisions
(6) Koilege or Koileke . . . . .	2 „
(7) Kaptumois . . . . .	3 „
(8) Kapsiondoi . . . . .	1 Division
(9) Kapianga . . . . .	1 „
(10) Kapsile . . . . .	1 „
(11) Kakimno . . . . .	1 „
(12) Cheptol . . . . .	1 „
(13) Kimñgoror . . . . .	1 „
(14) Murgaptor or Murkaptuk . . . . .	1 „
(15) Tuken . . . . .	1 „

Each division has its governing council, known as the Kirwaget-ap-Boriet (the council of the clan). Each council has a president, known as the Kirwagindet-ap-Boriet. The council is primarily a war council, and is composed of the captains of the warrior companies of the various ages, who are called Kirwagik. The present composition of the council is:

The Kiptayen (Captains) of the Kipkoimet age

„	„	„	Kablaleich	„
„	„	„	Kimnige	„
„	„	„	Nyonge	„
„	„	„	Maina	„

The Sowe age is almost extinct, and the Chuma, the youngest age, is too young to be represented on the council. The Maina, the age below the warriors, are present as Mestowik (apprentices),

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but have no voice in the council's decisions. Neither the Orkoiyot (the chief medicine man) nor any member of his clan (the Ngetundo Talai) are eligible to become members of this council, but the council communicates with the Orkoiyot, who is never present, through deputies known as Mautiets. Members of the blacksmith's clan are also debarred from joining this council.

In addition to the council of the clan there is a second council, known as the Kirwaget-ap-Amgautiet (the Council of the Gift). This council is composed of two travelling Elders, called Kirwagindet-ap-Amgautiet, who must always be strangers from some other part of the country, and who sit in conjunction with local Elders.

This council deals with all matters relating to property, but is mainly concerned in dividing inheritances. No member of the Orkoiyot's clan or blacksmith's clan is eligible to become a member of, or to be judged by this council.

The Council of the Gift is entitled to receive fees, but the fee is not payable till after the decision has been carried out.

The warriors are divided into regiments, each under a Kiptayat-ap-Boriet (captain of the clan); these are again sub-divided into district companies (Siritiets), each having a Kiptayat as their commanding officer.

Captains of regiments and companies are elected at the Circumcision Festival, which takes place about every four years.

Villages do not exist, but each division is sub-divided into family holdings or parishes, called Korets. Each Koret has its family tree, called the Kokwet, which is the meeting-place of every member of the Koret. Every family tree has its presiding Elder, called the Boyot. The members of the respective Korets are bound together by a bond of brotherhood and share their food, etc., in common, and are bound to aid each other against all enemies.

Huts are of three classes :

- (1) The Kööt (*Kaita* of Hollis).
- (2) The Sigiroido.
- (3) The Kaptieh.

The Kööt hut is the family hut, and is occupied by husband,

wife and young children, and sometimes a grandmother. Each wife has a separate hut, which is always built at a distance, often in another part of the district.

The Sigiroid hut is occupied by young unmarried sons. It is a very diminutive hut and is usually built close by the family hut, but with this exception groups of huts are never found.

The Kaptich hut is the cattle kraal hut, and is built on the grazing grounds far from the family hut. It is occupied by warriors and girls of several families, as a number of families usually club together and keep their cattle at the same Kaptich. A Kaptich will usually contain from 50 to 150 head of cattle.

Widows with grown-up sons usually occupy the same hut.

The grain store is called Chorget. This is a small hut built on piles close by the family hut. Grain is always stored in the ear and not threshed till required for food.

#### NAMES AND AGES

##### *The Name*

Every Nandi, whether boy or girl, is given a birth name.

Examples of boys' names :

Toimur  
Kipchoge

Examples of girls' names :

Tabune  
Chesaina

These names are retained till the boys reach the warrior age or the girls are married. The birth name is then dropped and the father's name adopted—thus Toimur becomes arap Kibe (the son of Kibe) and Tabune becomes chebochok Kimai (the daughter of Kimai).

The sons of arap Kibe when they reach the warrior age and drop their birth name will take the birth name of their father and become arap Toimur, and similarly his daughters would become chebochok Toimur.

A woman does not adopt her husband's name when she marries.

Widows with sons adopt the names of their sons.

*Example* : Kobot Kiprono = The mother of Kiprono.

The sons of widows will always bear the husbands' name, even though they may be born many years after his decease.

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Instances will be found in which men who have passed the warrior age are known by a name instead of as the son of So-and-so; the reason of this is that they have had a particularly illustrious ancestor, usually a grandfather, whose memory it is desired to perpetuate, and whose birth name is adopted. In such cases the name takes the prefix 'Kap' and the suffix 'in.'

### *Examples :*

Kapsegoin (the descendant of Sego)  
Kapkunoin (the descendant of Kuno)

Birth names are usually taken from some ancestor, and it is alleged that the shades of ancestors frequently appear to pregnant women, and when this is the case the name of the particular ancestor whose shade appeared is given to the child.

A woman may never mention her husband's name, and similarly a husband may never mention his wife's name.

The following are examples of men's names :

Kimoge	= large navel.
Kiptot	= born in the <i>totet</i> room of the hut.
Kipkoech	= born just before sunrise.
Kibegele	= front teeth missing.
Kipchobong	= a clever child.
Kiptum	= born at the circumcision time.
Sigawa	= from the <i>sigawet</i> tree.
Kibelat	= born when lightning is flashing.
Kipchirchir	= born in the shamba when the <i>wimbi</i> or eleusine grain is being cut.
Kibee	= born in the cattle boma.
Sambai	= born of a mother who begs food.
Kiptalam	= born when the locusts are about.
Matinyit	= cut ears.
Kipkatam	= left-handed.
Kibomet	= large head.
Baigong	= almost still-born.
Kiboit	= large ears.
Kimnet	= born when the cattle have gone to the salt-lick.
Kipkessia	= born in famine time when unripe corn is being ground.

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Kiprono = born when the goats return to the hut.  
 Melgut = one who licks his lips.  
 Maritim = named whilst still in embryo when father dying,  
 so that he may not die childless.

## The Age

Age is not reckoned in years as with us.

The following is a list of the ages or cycles and corresponding warrior companies :

Age or cycle ( <i>ipinda</i> )	Company	Approximate age in years of a member of the cycle
Sawe	Chonginiek	77 to 81
"	Oldarangu	73 " 77
"	Kiptoitutu	69 " 73
Kipkoimet	Chonginiek	64 " 68
"	Oldarangu	60 " 64
"	Kiptoitutu	56 " 60
Kablaleich	Chonginiek	51 " 55
"	Kibolgon	47 " 51
"	Kiptoitutu	43 " 47
Kimnige	Chonginiek	38 " 42
"	Kiptaru	34 " 38
"	Tetagat	31 " 34
Nyonge	Chonginiek	26 " 30
"	Taparit	22 " 26
"	Kiptoitutu	18 " 22
Maina	Not yet named	13 " 17
"	"	9 " 13
"	"	4 " 9
Chuma	"	0 " 4
"	Not yet born	— —
"	"	— —

**These ages are a perpetually recurring cycle.**

## RELIGION

The religion of the tribe is ancestor worship. The dead are known as the Oiik and are believed to reside under

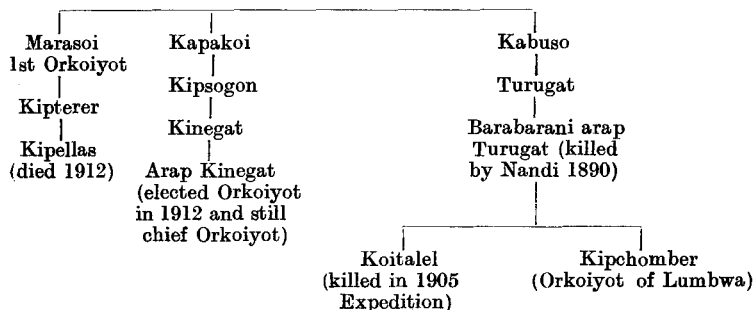
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the earth with their cattle. The shades of the dead walk the earth and watch over the living and protect them from injury. There are bad shades who destroy the living and the cattle in order to obtain possession of them. The shades appear to pregnant women at night, and the child when born is believed to be the shade reincarnated and bears its name. Prayers are frequently made to the dead.

Some five generations ago the tribe decided to adopt a religious head through whom intercession could be made to the ancestors in time of sickness, famine, etc. They accordingly sent a deputation to the Masai and obtained from them a man named Marasoi, who became the first Orkoiyot. The name seems to mean the attendant of the ancestors. Marasoi was quickly followed by two others named Kapakoi and Kabuso, and all three were in office at the same time, but in different localities. The office of Orkoiyot has since become hereditary, but through the three lines of ancestors, and falls to whichever line has a representative of an age and intelligence to fill the office.

### GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE CHIEF ORKOIYOTS OR LAIBONS

A Masai clan tracing its descent through the Sikilai, the former inhabitants of the Uasin-Gishu belonging to the Ngetundo sub-clan (totem lion) and the Nandi division of Talai.



The Orkoiyot lives the life of a recluse and is rarely seen. His principal function is to advise on the prospects

of a war or raid and to prepare medicine for the warriors. As previously pointed out he is waited on by deputies from the council of the clan called Mautiots, and through them gives his advice. The office is in no way an executive one. In addition to the Orkoiyot every member of his clan, the Ngetundo Talai—that is all the descendants of the three original Orkoiyots—is believed to possess occult powers, including the power to call down lightning to strike people and to bewitch them or their cattle with a look or, as is most frequently done, by placing the hand of an ape in the hut. Their numbers were formerly kept in check by periodical killings, but as this has had to be discontinued for the past twenty years the tribe is now in a quandary as to what to do with its witch-doctors, who have increased beyond what are considered reasonable numbers.

No member of this clan is eligible to become a member of any native council or to be judged by one.

#### DOCTORS AND WITCH-DOCTORS

*The Chepkerichiot.*—The Chepkerichiot corresponds to the ordinary medical practitioner. Both personally attend either males or females, except midwifery cases, which are always attended by the female doctors. A fee is charged, but is not payable unless or until the patient recovers. The medicinal properties and preparation of plants and herbs are secrets handed down from father to son or mother to daughter. Medicine is always disguised before being given to the patient, so that the secret may be kept.

Bleeding, cupping, bone-setting, and other minor operations are practised by the Chepkerichiot, but in the case of major operations a specialist is called in from the neighbouring tribe Nyangori. These specialists perform operations of some magnitude.

*The Kipsargaiot ♂, the Chepsargaiot ♀.*—The Kipsargaiot are usually consulted when the Chepkerichiot has failed or when witchcraft is suspected. They never attend the patient personally nor do they prescribe medicines. They discover the nature of the disease by a sense of smell or

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some form of divination, and name the man or woman who has cast a spell or bewitched the sick person. They remove spells by incantations and can call a curse. They also deal largely in charms. They may be either males or females.

*The Kibomut.*—The Kibomut is usually consulted after both the Chepkerichiot and Chepsargaiot have failed. When application is first made to him he casts stones in a drum or hollow tube and from these divines if the sick person is suffering from witchcraft. He then vaguely indicates the witch by some such description as a light coloured woman, a stranger, living on the other side of a river with one child.

He then goes to the hut of the sick person to pick up the scent, and from there follows the scent running round the country sniffing like a dog and holding a piece of wood, known as *labotwet*, in one hand and a knife in the other. As he runs and smells he digs the knife into the ground, and produces articles such as jackal's claws, hair, and insects.

After this exhibition he follows the scent to various huts, where he is usually bought off with a goat, till he finally runs the trail to the witch. The witch is then taken by the relatives of the sick person to his hut or to the family tree. Stakes are planted in the ground and a bow string is passed round the witch's head, the ends being made fast to the stakes on either side. She is then beaten by the relatives of the sick person, whilst the Kibomut prepares water and herbs with which he washes the sick person. If she lives through the ordeal the witch is then allowed to go free.

In some instances the women are assembled and placed in a line at the meeting-place of the parish or clan, and the Kibomut runs round them, smelling, till he has located the witch.

*The Kipiserget.*—The Kipiserget is a class of doctor whose business it is to make barren women bear children. They do not belong to the Ngetundo Talai (the wizards' clan). They are probably ventriloquists, and their procedure is to beat upon a gourd and raise the spirit of an ancestor. The ancestor then speaks from the gourd and advises the woman what she should do in order to become pregnant.



## MARRIAGE

Marriages are performed by a priest called the Moteriot. The ceremony consists in placing a ring of grass round the wrist of the bridegroom and a similar ring round the neck of the bride, after which the priest pronounces them man and wife. Other ceremonies follow, but this is the one and only binding act. This marriage is binding for life. Even in the event of the husband's death the widow can never marry again.

The qualifications required of a Moteriot are that he must be a good singer and have a large family.

The marriage price is a matter of agreement between the parents. The ordinary price is one heifer, one bull, and from two to six goats. The progeny of the heifer may or may not be returnable to the husband's family, according to the contract made. The marriage price is not payable till some five or six days after the marriage has been consummated.

The marriage price is returnable in the case of a woman who dies before she has borne a child.

Marriages between women are not uncommon; thus a widow who has borne only female children will seek out another woman and propose marriage to her. She pays as the marriage price the cattle which she has received as the marriage price of her own daughter; a form of marriage is gone through in which, amongst other ceremonies, their heads are bumped together to make them agree, and from that time the two women occupy the same hut and become 'man and wife.' The 'man' exercises all the rights of a husband, and may make the woman work for her. Any children which the woman may subsequently bear become the 'husband's' children, and will inherit the progeny of the cattle she has paid. If the woman does not bear children, at her death the 'husband' is entitled to the return of the dowry paid for her.

Widows may never remarry.

The *moterenik* sing: *moteriot* are the elders who organise the circumcision ceremonies.

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### INHERITANCE

Property is of two classes :

- (a) Inherited property.      (b) Acquired property.

Inherited property passes first to the brothers of the deceased and, subsequently, to his sons. Acquired property passes direct to the deceased's sons.

*The Chemūs Cow.*—This is the first charge on the property of the deceased, and goes to the person who removes the body of the deceased from the hut and lays him out in the bush.

*Law of Inheritance.*—The law of inheritance is that every male member of a family must inherit a female animal from each cow family as successive generations of cow calves are born. In the case of inherited property, the eldest brother takes the first parent of the cow family and the youngest brother the parent of the second cow family. Parents of cow families are then allotted to intermediate brothers. As successive generations of cow calves are born, the calves pass in successive generations through each of the brothers, till each possesses a female animal from each of the parent cow families. Second calves from the same parent cow pass to the sons of the deceased.

Bull calves are ordinarily retained by the owner of their mother, but in the case of a poor family two would be exchanged for a heifer and its progeny divided as above.

Acquired property is divided in a similar manner amongst the sons, instead of the brothers of the deceased. The eldest son usually takes charge of all the cattle till the youngest son is of an age to inherit when the cattle are divided.

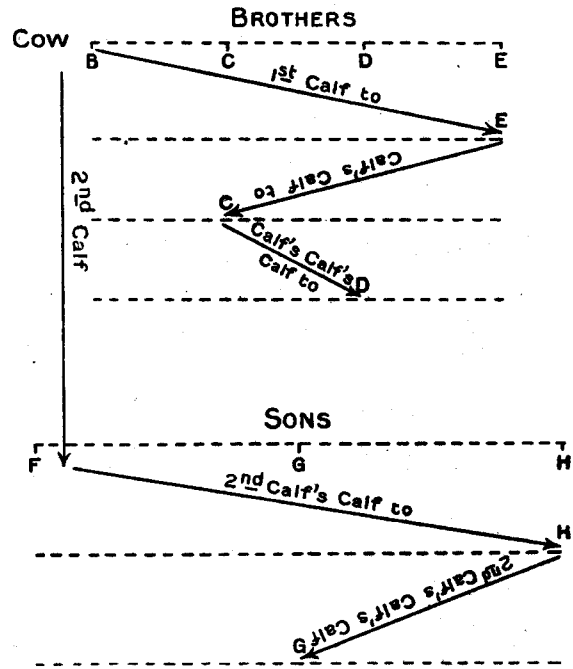
The diagrams shown on pages 13 and 14 give examples of inheritance. It will be observed that an exactly even division of cattle is thus brought about.

The odd cow is usually herded by a stranger and is not allotted till a calf has been born from it for each member of the family.

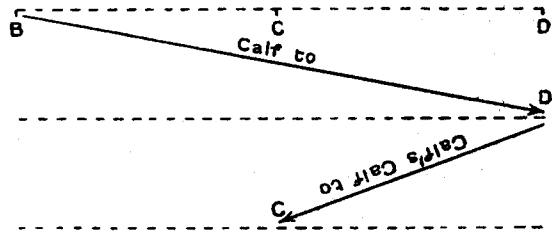
Instances have occurred in which headmen and others have acquired property to which they had no valid title. They have

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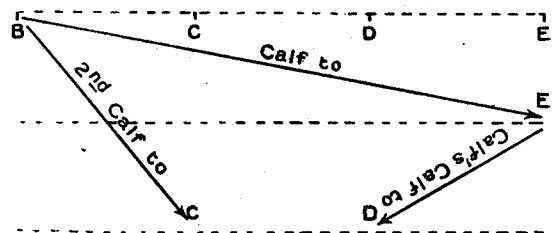
A. leaves 1 inherited cow, 4 brothers, and 3 sons.



A. leaves 1 head of acquired cow families and 3 sons.

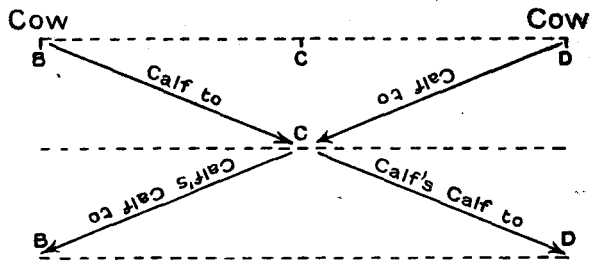


A. leaves 1 head of acquired cow families and 4 sons.

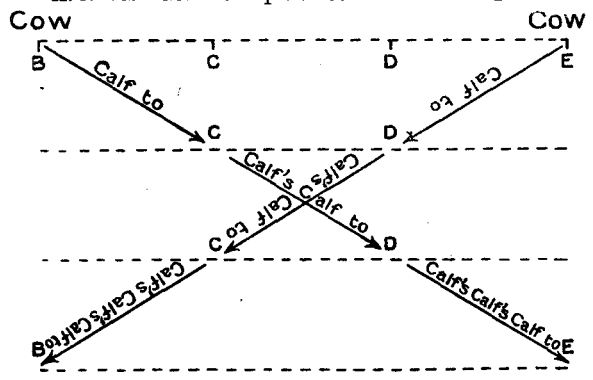


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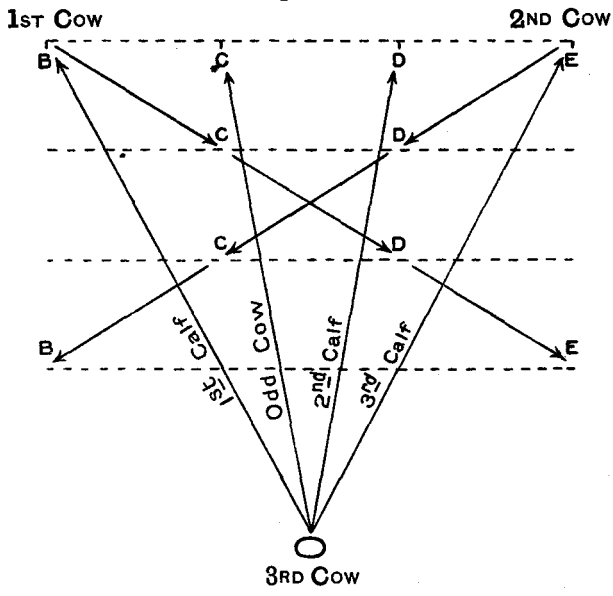
A. leaves 2 head of acquired cow families and 3 sons.



A. leaves 2 head of acquired cow families and 4 sons.



A. leaves 3 head of acquired cow families and 4 sons.



enjoyed the use of the cattle for their lifetime, but at their death all have passed out of their family to the family of the original owners through this system of division.

*The Chemwai Cow.*—The Chemwai cow is the cow paid as a marriage price. Often it is given to a son during his father's lifetime, so that he may purchase a wife. The progeny of this cow is a matter of bargaining in the marriage contract. If the father of the bridegroom is a rich man it will probably go to the bride's family in perpetuity, but if he is a poor man, arrangements will be made that its calves will revert to the bridegroom's family, passing through each member in successive generations of calves.

#### THE WIDOW'S DOMICILE

The following opinion was given by the leading elders when acting as assessors in a criminal cause :

When a man dies his property will be divided. His widow will obtain her share. It will remain her own personal property up to the time of her death. It is probable that she will require it for the purpose of contracting a 'marriage,' or 'female alliance,' with another woman, by whom she may have children (*sic*). In this case she would live with the woman she had married and enjoy the same freedom of domicile as a man.

If no such 'marriage' is contracted, and her husband has a brother living, she should go to live with him. If no brothers are living, and she has no children, she should go to live with the children of her husband by another wife.

If the widow is of opinion that she may suffer in property at the hands of her husband's relatives, she may return to the place where she was born; there she must choose a man of the totem of her husband's family, and he must visit her as a stranger.

No person has the right to seize a widow's property by reason of the fact that she has made default in her domicile.